

# MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

## Success Stories from the Field

### Cookshack, Inc.

#### Oklahoma Manufacturing Alliance

#### Cookshack Expands Through Eureka! Winning Ways

##### Client Profile:

Cookshack, Inc. manufactures commercial and residential smoker ovens from its factory in Ponca City, Oklahoma. The 50-year-old, family-owned company employs about 30 people. Cookshack sells its products -- including the smokers and a full line of accessories, sauces, and spices -- throughout the U.S. and overseas. Customers range from restaurant food chains to competitive chefs and residential enthusiasts.

##### Situation:

Cookshack had averaged high annual growth rates of 20 to 25 percent every year until 2000 when international competition grew. Growth slowed to 5 percent and the company began to look for avenues for cutting costs and increasing profits. Efforts in Lean manufacturing streamlined its plant, but the company struggled in taking new product ideas to fruition. Looking for guidance, Cookshack called on Johnny Thornburgh, a manufacturing extension agent with the Oklahoma Manufacturing Alliance (The Alliance), a NIST MEP network affiliate. Thornburgh suggested the Eureka! Winning Ways program, which offered a structured approach to new product development.

##### Solution:

From the 50 new ideas generated by Cookshack's initial Eureka! session, four emerged worthy of further research. The first idea was a mobile kitchen. Whereas the company's traditional products were permanently installed, the mobile kitchen would give cooks a portable smoker. Customers who want to take their smokers with them when they relocate, competitive cooks, and tailgaters would all benefit from the new product. After seven quick months of production, it was launched. The product has already taken off, and Cookshack anticipates a 20 percent increase in revenue and a 30 percent increase in profits. The second idea was a redesigned product line. The company combined an array of enhancements and improvements to its product line into a complete redesign to make the product friendlier to the end-user and differentiate it from overseas competition. Changes included a new size and structure to better accommodate foods, a digital controller, thermostatic probes, and fewer unique components to speed up the manufacturing process. These changes have already increased profits by 8 percent in only eight months. The third idea was an accessories sales program. After losing customers when they could not get Cookshack's sauce and seasonings quickly and locally, the company started a subscriber program to auto-ship products to customers. Easily implemented, customers are quickly signing up. These successes have already led Cookshack to a 'reload' of their Eureka! program, and in turn that reload has generated even more ideas. The company recently launched a pellet-fired charbroiler that is eco-friendly and opens up a new market with the potential of increased revenue and profit beyond smokers.

##### Results:

[www.mep.nist.gov](http://www.mep.nist.gov)



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- \* Increased profits by 8 percent.

Anticipated:

- \* 20 percent increase in revenue

- \* 30 percent increase in profits

#### **Testimonial:**

"Like many small manufacturers, we find that it's hard enough to come up with new ideas, and even harder to implement them. But the combination of the Eureka! process and invaluable coaching from the Oklahoma Manufacturing Alliance moved things along for us like never before. We could never have accomplished what we did without them."

Stuart Powell, President